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ELDER ABUSE
TIPS FOR INTERVIEWING ELDER VICTIMS AND PREPARATION FOR TRIAL
TALKING POINTS
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1. *It's important to establish trust and build a rapport during the first interview between the prosecutor and the elder victim. Effort should be made to conduct the first interview with the elder victim in their home. Look for photos, ask about them, demonstrate an interest in the elder's life. The interview should be more like a "conversation" with the victim.*
2. *Assess any mental capacity issues with the victim. If victim is over 75 ask them where they were during World War II. If prosecutor has concerns about dementia – they should consider conducting a Folstein, or mini-mental, test early during the first interview. (This consists of 10 – 15 questions that tests the victim's short-term memory and orientation)*
3. *Evaluate practical issues – in anticipation of court testimony -- such as the need for items such as: hearing aids, special eye glasses, oxygen, etc.*
4. *Determine if the victim has a preference as to where the prosecutor stands when addressing the victim.*
5. *Learn about the victim's need for certain medications that might affect their testimony?*
6. *Find out if the victim responds better in the morning or in the afternoon?*
7. *Determine if the victim has fears regarding retaliation or any misconceptions about the nature of the proceedings.*
8. *Try to alleviate the elder's possible feelings of intimidation during the trial. It is essential that the prosecutor work closely with the victim advocate to ensure that the elder has everything they need to testify. There should always be wheelchairs and walkers available in the courthouse.*
9. *Plan ahead and endeavor to make the court experience as positive as possible for the elder victim. For example: determine how the victim will be transported to court and find ways to make sure that the victim does not have to wait in court for long periods of time prior to testifying. (The San Diego DA's office has converted an office into an elder waiting room which is furnished with a sofa and recliner, soft lighting and a TV so that the elder can watch their all-important daytime favorite program.)*